

BLACKWOOD TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT GROUP – 27TH JULY 2006

**SUBJECT: UPDATE POSITION STATEMENT - BLACKWOOD ARTWORK
STRATEGY**

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF THE ENVIRONMENT

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. A successful grant application to the Arts Council of Wales has allowed officers of the Council, in conjunction with the Blackwood Arts Sub Group, to develop a Public Artwork Strategy for the town of Blackwood. A number of locations have been identified within this strategy for the introduction of public artwork and £150,000 has been secured through grant aid to start implementing proposals within the strategy.

2. CURRENT POSITION

- 2.1 Phase 1 of the Arts Strategy is now being implemented with the site opposite the Miners Institute being the first site within the artwork strategy to be developed. Sebastien Boyesen, an artist from West Wales has recently installed a piece entitled the Ring of Eternity. His inspiration comes from the following:

“All things from Eternity
Are of like forms and
Come around in a full circle”

- 2.2 The piece embodies the idea of industry meeting nature and how nature is now reclaiming landscapes scarred by heavy industry. The artist was keen to draw parallels on how the town of Blackwood had become established, first through small homesteads cropping up around St David’s Wood and secondly on the back of the coal industry. The piece also represents the way in which both industry and nature play major roles in the story of coal itself.



Concept stage – at artists studio



Final piece in situ

- 2.3 A large ring/circle has been chosen to reflect both the shapes of the celtic ring and the pit wheel – 2 strong links with the locality. The ring shape has also been chosen to symbolise the ring of eternity. This reference pays particular regard to the landscape of the locality. Once unmarred by human influence it became scarred by heavy industry and coalmining in particular. However, through time, a natural healing process has occurred and the land has returned to its former glory.
- 2.4 Two themes interact on the ring. One is the theme of nature while the other is of industry. The artist is trying to show in this one piece of work the links that exist between the two.
- 2.5 In addition, a floor mosaic has been installed around the base of the sculpture to add another dimension to the public artwork. Roundels depicting the history of the area will be embedded into the mosaic as the final part of the commission.



mosaic detail



stonework detail

- 2.6 Other artwork that is due for installation in the summer of 2006 as part of the Phase 1 programme include 2 pieces by the artist Jon Mills at the Hall Street public realm improvement scheme.

Tower of Hands

- 2.7 For this site, John Mills' idea of having a column of hands made out of steel was deemed the most appropriate for this space. A montage depicting how the final piece will look is shown below. The piece will stand at approximately 5.5 metres, weigh half a ton and be made out of korten steel. Seating will be incorporated at the base of the sculpture.
- 2.8 The work is intended to symbolize the idea of "community". The grouping of hands represents individuals coming together as is the case in a strong community.
- 2.9 A public exhibition was held in the foyer of the Blackwood Asda store to gain hand drawings of the local community that were then used to form the myriad of hands making up the column.



Photo mock-up highlighting location and size of piece

- 2.10 The artist visited the site in Mid July to finalise calculations for the load bearing foundation block that lies beneath the promenade site. Installation should begin in July and be finished by early August at the latest.



Piece being fabricated at artist's workshop

The Singing Tree

- 2.11 The idea here is to have a steel sculpture of a tree along with the wildlife associated with it. In essence the idea of a tree made out of steel echoes the theme of Sebastien Boyesen's commission - that of nature meeting industry. The artist is bringing a degree of interactivity with this sculpture and intends incorporating motion-activated sensors that will trigger off audio and lighting displays. The artworks will consist of an interactive tree sculpture containing 100 metallic birds in its branches. The movement sensors will set off bird sounds and light effects when people walk by. In addition the elaborate tree grille around the base of the tree will incorporate a 'leaf' theme. The location of this piece outside the new shop units has been chosen as it will fit in with a line of Lime trees that were planted as part of the public realm works.
- 2.12 Installation of this piece will run concurrently with the Tower of hands.



Photo mock up of tree in situ at The Pier, Hall Street



tree grille

birds within the tree

3. PHASE 2 COMMISSIONS

- 3.1 Pieces have now been commissioned for Phase 2 of the Artwork Strategy Implementation programme. These will be presented to the group in more detail at a later meeting. In short, they consist of 3 commissions. The 1ST is a piece at the bottom of Gordon Road to mark the entrance into Blackwood from the south. The second is a number of roundels located throughout Blackwood at floor level that will represent a timeline of the history of the area. The 3RD piece is to be developed as an archway over Gravel Lane in the middle of the town.